

THE EDITOR



THE Editor-in-Chief of THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING is taking a vacation, preparatory to devoting her whole time to the JOURNAL, and her substitute apologizes at the outset for any deficiencies which may be noticed. Her short experience has already made her realize afresh what a substantial debt we owe our Editor, who undertook to add such an exacting piece of work to the heavy responsibilities of a hospital.

THE plans for the Nurses' Congress are working out well, and the prospects are that we shall have a most satisfactory gathering, both in numbers and enthusiasm.

Our home nurses are bestirring themselves to send delegates, and the greatest interest is being felt in our foreign guests, how best to "give them a good time," and to make the most of their short stay. It is unfortunate that, all being the busiest kind of busy women, their time will necessarily be limited; and so it is much to be hoped that our local Entertainment Committees will vie with each other in planning out programmes. It will be hard indeed to surpass the hospitality which was shown to American nurses at the time of the last International Congress in London.

We would suggest to our Entertainment Committees not to overdo showing the visitors through hospitals, but to try and let them see as much as possible of other things, more especially anything that is different from what they have at home, for it is novelty that attracts one when abroad, and they will all be interested to see what is genuinely American, both in sights and in manners.

It is much to be hoped that a wide variety of opinions and many diverging points of view will be presented at the Congress, for beside being so much more interesting, nothing does one so much good as having people disagree with one. It keeps one balanced.

We are inclined to think that some misunderstanding exists in certain quarters about the actual purpose of our Congress, since refusals have come in to the committee, expressing the kindest interest, but regretting on the ground that to be present might seem equivalent to supporting views and policies not actually held by the writers.

This seems to us distinctly an unfounded fear, since our one purpose in our Congress work is to *compare* ideas and to become acquainted with each other. The same baseless fear appears in the correspondence

lately published in the London *Times* regarding nursing questions, wherein dissatisfaction was expressed lest certain tendencies in English nursing thought should be heard here and be supposed to represent all of English nursing.

Now we are sure we speak for the whole profession in America in saying that all shades of thought will be welcome, and each one will be taken just for itself, and not for anything else. We have invited all the various elements in English nursing, as well as every shade of variety on the Continent and in other countries, as far as we have learned of them, and cordially urge them all to come. No one need wear a label, and all that is needed, in order to secure proper representation of every interest, is for every one to be present and share in our proceedings. Or, if they cannot come, they could write papers, which will be published hereafter in our reports.

Perhaps in our happy-go-lucky way we do not always take other people seriously enough, and it was a little terrifying to hear that one of our foreign correspondents asked whether our Nurses' Congress had been officially recognized by the government of the United States!

IN a former editorial our readers were reminded what a vast mission work nurses might carry on, as they went about among their private-duty cases, simply by talking suggestively and intelligently on questions of public health and sanitation, notably in regard to the measures necessary for limiting the spread of tuberculosis.

We wish to recur to this theme, and urge upon our rank and file the definite satisfaction which may be found in supporting and helping to make known the various movements towards prevention of this dreadful disease—not simply prevention by means of burning, boiling, and disinfection, but prevention which aims at keeping well people well by seeing that the houses they live in and the places they work in are not allowed just to be forcing houses, pure and simple, for all kinds of contagions. Two such movements are described in our last issue in the "Reports from the Tenement-House Commission" and the article on the work of the "Consumers' League."

As to the former we can do little but talk, though even thus we may do good by planting in various minds a crop of new ideas, but as to the latter we can be of definite and material help every time we go to purchase a piece of ready-made clothing. As Mrs. Kelley said in her article, the greatest energy of the league is now devoted to investigating the houses and factories where clothing is made, in the hope that when the public is fully acquainted with the horrors of the sweat-shop, public opinion will refuse to support manufacturers who grow rich at the ex-

pense of the lives and health of their employees, and will encourage, morally and financially, the more enlightened firms who wish to provide decent living conditions for their workers.

Nurses, from the nature of their work, are almost certain to buy most of their under and outer garments ready made. We think too that, ignorant of the circumstances of their fellow-beings who work at the machines in the factories, they too often go to the bargain counter or to the stores where great sales of cheap clothing are advertised, quite unconscious of how much harder they are making it for the workers to live. We have seen these horrible sweat-shops, the thought of which rises like a nightmare behind every counter of cheap clothing. It is there that people are made ready and started in tuberculosis, and that germs of scarlet fever, measles, and skin and eye diseases are cultivated so thoroughly that all our boiling and baking afterwards are of little account.

What we can do is for each one, when purchasing, to ask if the firm has the desired article bearing the label of the league, and to explain that we wish it because it means fair conditions of work for the worker.

In almost every large city now are to be found retail stores which keep these decently made goods, but even if they cannot be found, we keep on asking for them before we finally purchase, for in this way the demand is created, and presently the retailer will be induced to buy from the manufacturer who sells the rightcously made clothing.

Every month, through this pressure of public opinion, one or two new factories are added to the list of those who are granted the label, and the secretary of the league is constantly investigating others, too often to find that their conditions are too bad even to be considered.

If every woman would do her share, in sympathy for the workers and in horror of disease and filth, every article of woman's clothing could soon be included in the list of those bearing the label which stands for preventive hygiene and sanitation.

We know various nurses in New York State who must be directly or indirectly affected by the law lately passed in that State giving property holding women the right to vote on appropriations of money in towns of the third class and villages.

Some own little houses themselves, or their sisters and mothers are taxpayers. We sincerely trust, and we also believe, that their training has made them better fitted to accept this new duty with the purpose of performing it conscientiously and with intelligence, for this will be the best way of getting the same right extended to other places.



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